The Qualities of Skillful Leadership

by Jim Rohn

If you want to be a leader who attracts quality people, the key is to become a person of quality yourself. Leadership is the ability to attract someone to the gifts, skills, and opportunities you offer as an owner, as a manger, as a parent. I call leadership the great challenge of life.

What's important in leadership is refining your skills. All great leaders keep working on themselves until they become effective. Here are some specifics:

1) **Learn to be strong but not rude.** It is an extra step you must take to become a powerful, capable leader with a wide range of reach. Some people mistake rudeness for strength. It's not even a good substitute.

2) **Learn to be kind but not weak.** We must not mistake kindness for weakness. Kindness isn't weak. Kindness is a certain type of strength. We must be kind enough to tell somebody the truth. We must be kind enough and considerate enough to lay it on the line. We must be kind enough to tell it like it is and not deal in delusion.

3) **Learn to be bold but not a bully.** It takes boldness to win the day. To build your influence, you've got to walk in front of your group. You've got to be willing to take the first arrow, tackle the first problem, discover the first sign of trouble.

4) **You've got to learn to be humble, but not timid.** You can't get to the high life by being timid. Some people mistake timidity for humility. Humility is almost a Godlike word. A sense of awe. A sense of wonder. An awareness of the human soul and spirit. An understanding that there is something unique about the human drama versus the rest of life. Humility is a grasp of the distance between us and the stars, yet having the feeling that we're part of the stars. So humility is a virtue; but timidity is a disease. Timidity is an affliction. It can be cured, but it is a problem.

5) **Be proud but not arrogant.** It takes pride to win the day. It takes pride to build your ambition. It takes pride in community. It takes pride in cause, in accomplishment. But the key to becoming a good leader is being proud without being arrogant. In fact I believe the worst kind of arrogance is arrogance from ignorance. It's when you don't know that you don't know. Now that kind of arrogance is intolerable. If someone is smart and arrogant, we can tolerate that. But if someone is ignorant and arrogant, that's just too much to take.

6) **Develop humor without folly.** That's important for a leader. In leadership, we learn that it's okay to be witty, but not silly. It's okay to be fun, but not foolish.

   Lastly, deal in realities. **Deal in truth.** Save yourself the agony. Just accept life like it is. Life is unique. Some people call it tragic, but I'd like to think it's unique. The whole drama of life is unique. It's fascinating. And I've found that the skills that work well for one leader may not work at all for another. But the fundamental skills of leadership can be adapted to work well for just about everyone: at work, in the community, and at home.